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Communion Rites Held by Scottish, Swedish Clergy

(Stockholm) - Scottish Presbyterian and Swedish Lutheran churchmen recently administered Holy Communion to one another in accordance with the traditional orders of both churches.

The Primate of the Church of Sweden, Archbishop Gunnar Hultgren of Uppsala, and Dr. J. H. S. Burleigh, moderator of the Church of Scotland, participated in the services, held in conjunction with a four-day conference of a small group of theologians from each body at Sigtuna near Stockholm.

The conference, the first of its kind between representatives of the two groups, was preceded by an exchange of correspondence which began nearly a decade ago.

Dr. Hultgren's predecessor, Archbishop Yngve Brilioth, had replied that he considered discussions on the subject unnecessary "since no hindrance exists on either side" to the practice of intercommunion. However, the conference here, convened by Dr. Hultgren, took place against a background of protests from those who contended that the Lutheran confessions were being violated. (See EPS No. 13).

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Conference participants were told that one of the obstacles to intercommunion may be the stand taken by the Swedish Church in favour of admitting women to the ministry. Also discussed were church-state relations and various aspects of modern evangelism. EPS, Geneva.

Presbyterians May Issue US Church Union Proposal

(Philadelphia) - Steps toward union with three other major Protestant bodies in the United States are expected to be initiated by the United Presbyterian Church in the USA at its annual General Assembly at Buffalo, New York, May 17-24.

Denominational leaders said they expect the assembly to issue a formal invitation to the United Church of Christ, the Protestant Episcopal and the Methodist Churches to consider such a union, which was originally suggested by Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, stated clerk of the United Presbyterian Church.

Expressing the belief that his denomination should take the initiative for such a move, Dr. Blake reported that nearly 40 of the 220 Presbyteries have called for such action and none has acted negatively toward the proposal.

It is also expected that the question will come up in some form at the triennial General Convention of the Episcopal Church in Detroit in September. It has evoked criticism from some "high churchmen" or Anglo-Catholics, who believe an equal or "common ministry" would effect the church's episcopacy and apostolic succession.

In making the proposal, Dr. Blake said he was moved by "the scandal of our divisions", which have caused particular "embarrassment and handicap on the mission fields". However, in setting the broad outline of a combined church which is "truly Catholic and truly Reformed", he has made it clear that he was not favouring "a national Protestant power bloc", but rather a "union or fellowship at the Communion table", and "a visible, effective unity in the local community".

Meanwhile, a conservative Southern Presbyterian weekly, The Presbyterian Journal, has proposed a re-alignment of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA and the Presbyterian Church in the US (Southern) to form two new churches -- one "ecumenical" and the other "evangelical".

The paper said editorially the Blake proposal "would cause Presbyterianism to vanish from America in favour of an ecumenical church where doctrinal integrity would be subordinated to organizational bigness".

Under the alternative plan, The Journal said, one Presbyterian church would be committed to the historic Reformed faith while the other would be openly receptive to a merger such as the one suggested by Dr. Blake.

EPS, Geneva.

WCC Affiliation Rejected by Australian Baptists

(Sydney) - Proposals to affiliate with the World Council of Churches have, for the second time, been rejected by the Baptist Union of New South Wales.

In urging against WCC membership, several speakers charged that the international ecumenical organization "aimed at a complete union of the churches". This charge has been repeatedly denied by the WCC, which has

made it clear that in no sense is it an administrative body which exerts authority over member churches.

Speakers also argued that Baptists could not cooperate with churches that "deny religious liberty". They pointed to the "present persecution of the Baptists in Greece which was instigated by the Orthodox Church there, a member of the World Council of Churches".

However, speakers said the Australian Baptists were quite prepared to "cooperate with other Christians in all evangelical and inter-church movements whose objectives they can support". EPS, Geneva.

Methodists Schedule African Strategy Consultation

(New York) - The future course of Methodist policies and work in Africa is expected to be shaped at a top-level strategy conference to be held May 8-16 under the auspices of the denomination's Board of Missions either at Elisabethville in the Gongo's Katanga Province or at Salisbury in Southern Rhodesia.

Seventy-five leaders from the United States, South America, Europe, Asia and Africa will attend the sessions. They will include executives and members of the US mission board, clergymen and lay leaders from Europe, Asia and South America, and 53 leaders in Africa, including four Methodist bishops with episcopal responsibilities on the continent.

A 16-member advisory committee will be formed among the representatives from outside the United States to counsel with the board and serve as an agency through which Methodist leaders around the world can exchange ideas and share information. Before assembling for the strategy sessions, all delegates from outside Africa will receive orientation as part of four-member teams studying conditions in the Congo Angola, Liberia, Southern Rhodesia, Algeria, Tunisia, Mozambique and the Union of South Africa.
EPS, Geneva.

Dr. Fisher Submits British Church Council Resignation

(Dublin) - The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Geoffrey Francis Fisher, has submitted to the British Council of Churches his resignation as president, a post he has held since 1945.

A representative committee is expected to be appointed at the council's forthcoming semi-annual meeting, to be held here April 25-26, to consider a successor to Dr. Fisher, who will retire May 31. In the meantime, the executive committee has asked the archbishop to remain in office until the council's autumn meeting.

Dr. Fisher will preside at the forthcoming council meeting, which represents the first time the BCC has convened in the Republic of Ireland. Three member churches -- the Church of Ireland, the Presbyterian and the Methodist Churches -- are found in the Republic as well as in Northern Ireland.

In addition to council members, 20 official observers have been invited, including the Archbishop of Dublin, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland, and the president of the Methodist Church of Ireland.

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Among the issues coming before the meeting are arrangements for Holy Communion at the Third British Conference of Christian Youth, to be held at Leicester next year, a report on the further education of young people, and another from the Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament.

EPS, Geneva.

Transvaal Church Adopts Resolutions on WCC Consultation

(Pretoria) - Contacts between the Dutch Reformed Church of Transvaal and the World Council of Churches will be maintained although its synod has voted to withdraw from the international ecumenical organization. (See Document).

The Transvaal church withdrew from the WCC following a race consultation held last December in Johannesburg under World Council auspices. The Dutch Reformed Church of Africa severed its connections for similar reasons. (See EPS Nos. 13, 14).

However, the Transvaal synod voted to remain in correspondence with the WCC, and instructed its committee for current affairs to make a thorough study of the concept of ecumenicity in cooperation with a similar committee of the Council of Dutch Reformed Churches. It also instructed the committee to give further consideration to the statement issued by the Johannesburg consultation.

The synod disapproved of criticism of the South African Government's race policy by the consultation, and reaffirmed its support of the Union's policy of differentiation. It also expressed regret that the consultation resolutions were adopted before a "proper" church meeting had an opportunity to consider them.

In a resolution on membership in the World Council, the synod cited as a reason for its withdrawal "the long-cherished ideal of church union" which, it said, would be "in danger of being jeopardized...", if it retained membership in the WCC.

EPS, Geneva.

US Theological Students Protest Against Apartheid

(Boston) - An orderly demonstration was staged outside Boston University recently by Negro theological students who were protesting against South Africa's race policy.

The students' demonstration coincided with an address at the university by South Africa's Ambassador Willem Maude, who contended that his country's apartheid policy is designed to benefit whites and blacks alike.

Ambassador Maude quoted a recent statement of Prime Minister H. F. Verwoerd: "We are carefully preparing the Bantu for an ever-growing share of responsibility. When the time comes for their independence, they will have become a democratically-experienced nation".

He added that his nation intends to safeguard the position of the whites "in areas where European immigrants settled more than 300 years ago".

EPS, Geneva.

Churches Deplore Tactics of John Birch Society

(New York) - Several Protestant bodies throughout the United States have levelled widespread criticism against the extreme right wing political movement, known as the John Birch Society.

The society's founder, Robert H. W. Welch, of Belmont, Mass., has contended that former President Eisenhower "is a dedicated, conscious agent of the Communist conspiracy". He has also charged that Presidents Roosevelt and Truman, along with the late Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, were "communist tools".

The society's four announced purposes are (1) to organize the impeachment of Chief Justice Earl Warren of the US Supreme Court (2) to expose and boycott all goods made behind the Iron Curtain (3) to work for a constitutional amendment abolishing the Federal income tax and (4) to strengthen the work of the House Committee on un-American activities.

The society has launched telephone and writing campaigns and is distributing "documentation" of its charge that the Chief Justice in his Supreme Court opinions has voted 92 percent of the time in favour of communists and subversives. He has also alleged that communists have infiltrated the Protestant clergy in the US.

Meanwhile, the Texas State Council of Churches referred to the organization as a "dictator-run, semi-secret society", while the Northern California-Nevado Council of Churches urged its members to be alert "against the tactics of those totalitarians who bore from within and attempt to manipulate sincere people so that they unwittingly further subversive ends".

Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, stated clerk of the United Presbyterian Church, declared in Santa Barbara, California, that it was time for church members "to wake up to what is happening to you under the guise of anti-communism". Stating that the John Birch Society is spreading false witness against the clergy and lay leaders of his denomination and the National Council, Dr. Blake cautioned: "Don't let your Americanism and your Presbyterianism be corrupted by those who would substitute a fuehrer principle for our free society". EPS, Geneva.

Rumanian Church Will Send Observers to New Delhi

(Geneva) - His Beatitude Justinian Marina, Patriarch of the Rumanian Orthodox Church, has informed the general secretary of the World Council of Churches that his church gladly accepts the invitation of the World Council of Churches to send an observer to the Third Assembly of the WCC at New Delhi in November.

His Beatitude told the Rev. Francis House, associate general secretary of the WCC, who was making a short visit to Bucharest, that the Rumanian Church, which is not a member of the Council, was now taking a very great interest in the ecumenical movement. They had been very well informed about ecumenical developments by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, especially since the meeting of the Central Committee of the WCC at Rhodes in 1959, he said.

The Patriarch observed that the Rumanian Church had taken an active part in the ecumenical movement before the formation of the World Council and had acquired much experience of ecumenical meetings. The time had again come, he said, for the Rumanian Church to take an active share. There were now good possibilities of closer contact and rapprochement between the Rumanian Orthodox Church and both the World Council and the churches of the Anglican Communion.

Since 1958 the Journal of the Rumanian Patriarchate has published extensive news reports of ecumenical developments and extracts from the Report of the 1958 Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops. (The whole Report has been translated into Rumanian by Professor Vintula Popescu).

During his short visit to Bucharest, Mr. House was invited to visit the Theological Institute and Seminary, the extensive church printing house and workshops, and a number of convents and monasteries in the neighbourhood. He said he was greatly impressed by the amount of repair and reconstruction of damage caused by the earthquake (of 1940) and the war that had been done by the Patriarchate in recent years, and by the fact that a considerable number of new churches had been built in the suburbs of the city. EPS, Geneva.

Missouri Synod Urged to Sever NCC Connections

(Austin, Texas) - The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has been urged to sever all connections with the National Council of Churches (USA).

A resolution urging such action was adopted at the 38th annual convention of the denomination's Texas District here after the Rev. Albert F. Jesse, district president, called upon Lutherans to take "an uncompromising stand on sound doctrine and practice".

"Spiritual resources of our nation by which so many powerful foes have been overcome in the past are being depleted," he said. "Cries for the amalgamation of once relatively conservative church bodies with those which have been consistently liberal are ominous indeed."

Although the Missouri Synod is not an official member of the NCC, it has cooperative arrangements with several of its departments and commissions, notably in the fields of home and foreign missions and social welfare.

"Some officials of the NCC have assumed that the cooperation of our boards and departments means that we are in agreement with all that is done in and by the NCC -- and this is simply not true", said the Rev. Charles W. Keturakat, pastor of St. Paul'sLutheran Church, San Antonio, and a member of the committee which drafted the resolution. EPS, Geneva

Students Discuss African Life in Technical Society

(Geneva) - A conference of African students living in Europe has adopted four resolutions dealing with their personal involvement and responsibility as Christians in building up their own nations and Africa as a whole.

Students from 11 African nations attended the conference held at the John Knox House here under the auspices of the World Council of Churches Department on the Laity and the World Student Christian Federation.

Resolutions adopted by the conference follow:

One -- Our common study of the African family in an evolving technical society under Christian impact has made us conscious of the problems facing present-day Africa. We note a great confusion in many aspects, and request, in particular, that the African churches that have already begun a serious study on polygamy pursue it, and that those that have not yet undertaken this do so.

Two -- Our hopes that Africa fulfill its vocation to the world community by developing a communal society make us conscious of the fact that political independence alone is not adequate to this end, and that complete decolonisation in the social and economic domains is also necessary for the full independence of African nations.

Three -- Our life as students in Europe makes us aware of the fact that the press, radio and all other means of public communication do not represent affairs in Africa in the best way. We call upon them to adopt an unbiased attitude in order to avoid creating misunderstanding between Europeans and Africans.

Four -- Our oneness in Christ leads us to express with deep concern at the departure of the Dutch Reformed Church of Africa (Nededuits Hervormde Kerk) from the World Council of Churches. This move, based purely on a particular doctrine of race, is not in accordance with the Word of God as contained in the Holy Scriptures.

The Hervormde Kerk, one of the smaller Dutch Reformed bodies in the Union, withdrew from the WCC as a result of a race consultation held last December in Johannesburg under World Council auspices. EPS, Geneva.

Conference of Churches and Missions in the Pacific

(Apia, West Samoa) - A Conference of Churches and Missions in the Pacific area will be held April 22 - May 4 under the auspices of the International Missionary Council at the Malua Theological College, near Apia, West Samoa, by invitation of the churches in Samoa.

This conference is the first of its kind to be held in the area. Fifty-five representatives of churches and missions will be attending, from Samoa, Cook Islands, Gilbert and Ellice Islands, Niue, Nauru, New Caledonia, Tahiti, Caroline and Marshall Islands, New Hebrides, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Fiji and three territories of New Guinea. They represent churches and missions of six denominations.

The chairman will be Dr. S. A. Havea of Tonga. Two fraternal representatives from the East Asia Christian Conference, a consultant from Hawaii, and members of staff of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council will participate. Five commissions in the conference will consider the subjects: the ministry, the unfinished evangelistic task, the relevance of the Gospel to the changing conditions of life in the Pacific, the place of young people in the life of the Church, and the Christian family. EPS, Geneva.

Catholic Women Hear of Christian Unity Gains

(Roanoke) - The cause of Christian unity has been promoted by the World Council of Churches and the decision of Pope John XXIII to call a Second Vatican (Ecumenical) Council, a conference of Roman Catholic women was informed here.

This point was made by both Col. Francis Pickens Miller, a Presbyterian layman and former president of the Virginia Council of Churches, and Father Eugene Burke, professor of theology at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D. C. They spoke at the biennial convention of the National Council of Catholic Women's Richmond Diocesan Council.

Describing the growth of the ecumenical movement, Col. Miller noted that as new denominations were organized, "the spirit of God was at work in men's hearts moving them to hunger more and more for unity".

Col. Miller traced the growth of Protestant-Orthdox unity endeavours, beginning with the organization of the World Student Christian Federation in 1895, to the creation of the World Council in Amsterdam in 1948.

Pointing out that the WCC will hold its Third Assembly in New Delhi, India, Nov. 18-Dec. 6, Col. Miller, a member of the WCC Central Committee, noted that "the mission of the Church (will be put) at the very heart of the ecumenical movement" when the International Missionary Council is integrated with the World Council.

Stressing that "fresh winds are blowing away age-old animosities and prejudices" between Protestants and Catholics, he further paid tribute to the work being done by the Secretariat for Christian Unity in preparation for the forthcoming Vatican Council.

"This is the Holy Spirit at work in the hearts of men everywhere", he said, "and it is the Holy Spirit who has been working in this matter through John XXIII, for whom I thank God and take courage".

Father Burke, paying tribute to the WCC for promoting "a climate favourable to unity", pointed out that "too much emphasis has been placed on the differences" dividing Catholics and Protestants.

"The Bible which we all have is a logical place to begin work on what we have in common", he said.

Father Burke termed the division of Christians "the disgrace of Christendom", especially on the mission fields. He said he believed the time was ripe for Christians to present a united front against the forces in the world today which would destroy all faiths.

Viewing the forthcoming Vatican Council as the beginning of a dialogue instead of a debate between members of all faiths, he said the key to unity is "the recognition of the individual sincerity of every human being". EPS, Geneva.

EKD Critical of East Germany's New Labour Law

(Berlin) - The Evangelical Church in German (EKD) has rejected the draft of a new East German labour law as "a serious attack on freedom of belief and of conscience".

The church's criticism of the code was contained in a letter just made public from Bishop Friedrich-Wilhelm Krummacher of the Evangelical Church in Pomerania, on behalf of the Conference of East German Churches, to the East German Chamber of Deputies. However, the government disregarded the church's stand on the measure, which will become effective July 1.

In his letter, Bishop Krummacher contended that the new legislation gives the impression that the fulfillment of plans is more important than the consideration of human lives.

However, the most serious criticism arises from the fact that "the draft legislation not only regulates the external conditions under which people are to work, but also tries to impose its terms on their conscience and forces them to accept the ethics of socialism", he continued.

Bishop Krummacher further maintained that the purpose of the code is "to try to speed up the process of re-educating the workers in the German People's Republic and turning them into people with socialist minds".

Dr. Kurt Scharf, chairman of the EKD Council, voiced similar criticism of the new law in speaking to the Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (ELKD) in session here. He said the law "turns man into a tool of socialism and of an ideology which does not know, and does not want to know, anything of man's dignity as a creature of God". EPS, Geneva.

WCC Sponsors Racial, Ethnic Relations Consultation

(Geneva) - A consultation on racial and ethnic relations has recommended that the World Council of Churches should actively aid its member churches in dealing with racial problems.

Twenty-five church leaders and race relations experts attended the conference held here recently to outline a programme for the WCC's Secretariat on Racial and Ethnic Relations, authorized last summer by the World Council's Central Committee.

The consultation recommended that the WCC assist its affiliated churches in analyzing the present racial situation, in coping with certain "burning issues" of the problem, and in acquiring a deeper theological understanding of the Christian meaning of race.

The World Council was further urged to arrange for a series of consultations in areas of major racial tension and to help through the exchange of information and visits by specialized consultants.

Consultation recommendations will be forwarded to the WCC's Third Assembly which will be held in New Delhi, India, Nov. 18-Dec. 6, for its consideration and action.

Among the speakers were Dr. J. Oscar Lee, director of the Department of Racial and Cultural Relations of the National Council of Churches (USA); Mr. Philip Mason, director of the Race Relations Institute in London; Mr. Fred Van Wyk, associate director of the South African Institute of Race Relations; the Rev. Isaac Mumpansha, a pastor in Northern Rhodesia, and Mr. O. R. Hensman of Ceylon.

Dr. Robert S. Bilheimer, director of the WCC's Division of Studies, was consultation chairman. EPS, Geneva.

In Brief

A Protestant centre will be established at the Cité universitaire, the residential centre of the University of Paris, by the French Student Christian Movement. The Rev. Charles Westphal, president of the French Protestant Federation, recently laid the cornerstone for the centre, which will include a chapel and recreation and meeting rooms.

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The East German Department of Church Affairs has reported that a total of 6,060 Protestant and 1,433 Roman Catholic clergymen are serving in the East Zone. It further noted that there are seven Jewish communities in East Germany with a total membership of some 2,000.

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A group of young Germans, affiliated with Aktion Versoehnung, (Action for Reconciliation), will assist in the restoration of Coventry Cathedral, destroyed by Nazi bombers in World War II. The volunteers are skilled bricklayers, carpenters and craftsmen. Members have previously restored a church in France, built a youth centre in Holland, a community centre in Israel, and an international centre in Greece. The group also established a complete farm in Norway.

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The Rev. Jörg Rothermundt of Stuttgart, will succeed the Rev. Jürgen Roloff, June 1, as assistant to the director of the Department of Theology of Lutheran World Federation in Geneva, Switzerland. In his new post, Pastor Rothermundt will assist the department's director, Dr. Vilmos Vajta, in the scholarship programme of the department and in its quarterly literature survey.

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The Rt. Rev. Richard Ambrose Reeves, former Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg, South Africa, has arrived in New York to begin a six-weeks speaking tour of 15 cities in the United States. Bishop Reeves, an outspoken critic of South Africa's racial policy, is making the tour under the auspices of the National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

* * *

The Archbishop of York, Dr. Arthur Michael Ramsey, left England this week to participate in independence celebrations in Sierra Leone. Dr. Ramsey, who will become Archbishop of Canterbury next month, will also visit Fourah Bay College, founded in 1827 by the Church Missionary Society.

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Death has taken Dr. Nicolas Louvaris, 74, noted Greek theologian and former Minister of Education and Cults in his country. Archbishop Theoklitos of Athens, head of the Orthodox Church in Greece, officiated at the funeral rites.

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Gratitude has been expressed to Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, for his "very personal interest" in the projected African radio station to be established in the country by the Lutheran World Federation. Dr. Sigurd Aske, LWF's Broadcasting Service director, expressed his appreciation in an audience at the imperial palace in Addis Ababa. EPS, Geneva.

Document:

The full text of the resolutions adopted by the synod of the Dutch Reformed Church of the Transvaal concerning the World Council of Churches follows:

Resolution on W.C.C. Consultation:

1. Synod regrets the passing and publication of such far-reaching resolutions as those passed by the Church Consultation at Cottesloe, before a proper church meeting has had the opportunity to consider them, and decides that all resolutions conflicting with our Church's formulated policy are unacceptable to this gathering.

2. Synod strongly disapproves of the criticism of government policy in this manner and in such a way as:

(a) it has unnecessarily embarrassed the government in carrying out its difficult task;

(b) other more positive and tried ways are open to the church as such for this purpose;

(c) the church has up to this stage, in carrying out its missionary task, always enjoyed the good support and co-operation of the Government, which we wish to place on record with gratitude and appreciation;

(d) it took place at the unfortunate stage when South Africa was in the centre of hostile attacks;

3. Synod reaffirms that the church has accepted it as part of its calling to also promote the highest interests of the non-white population groups as well as others, and is convinced that this can best be done according to the historical policy of differentiation.

4. Through the pastoral letter the Synod calls all members of the church to continue maintaining and promoting the Christian attitude toward the non-whites in both the temporal and spiritual spheres.

5. Synod instructs its Committee for Current Affairs to enquire which resolutions of the W.C.C. Consultation demand further thought and formulation, and to consider and report on them.

6. Synod notes the fact that our representatives admit certain errors in their actions with regard to procedure. It disapproves of the resolutions of the Consultation taken as a whole, but accepts the good faith and integrity of its representatives, who have tried to serve their church under difficult circumstances, and trusts that their services will continue to be of great value for the church, to the glory of the Name of the Lord.

Resolutions on W.C.C. Membership:

1. In view of the report of the ad hoc committee, from which it is clear that there are many misgivings about the World Council of Churches, and for the sake of the long-cherished ideal of church union (of the federated Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke), the attainment of which is already in sight but which is in danger of being jeopardized by our church's membership of the World Council of Churches, the Synod resolves to terminate the said membership forthwith;

2. Synod instructs its Committee for Current Affairs to make a thorough study, in cooperation with a similar committee of the Council of D. R. Churches, of the idea of ecumenicity.

3. Synod decides to remain in correspondence with the World Council of Churches.

EPS, Geneva.